Teaching Performance and Its Relationship toResearchPerformance

Background and Motivation

Over the years, academics, students and the general public have questioned the measurement of faculty teaching performance and whether a professor's involvement in research has any effect on his or her ability to teach. Professors not involved in research are inclined to dismiss the value that performing research has on teaching. This issue raises many related questions, such as: How is teaching performance related to class size? Are research-oriented faculty members better, or worse classroom teachers? Are teaching evaluations closely related to the grades given by the instructors? Is it preferable to have senior faculty, as opposed to junior faculty, as the primary instructors for classroom teaching?

The answers to the above questions, however, often depend on the individual professor's point of view. In the 1980s, whether or not an increased emphasis on research might impede teaching progress was a frequent topic of conversation. These days, such debates are rare among faculty at top-ranked universities because conventional wisdom has shown that active research complements teaching activities. Because no rigorous study aimed at answering these questions has been performed, we decided to conduct our own analysis.

Study

The historical study is based on the teaching and research reports of 350 tenure-track faculty and 50 non-tenure track teaching staff at Texas A & M University's College of Engineering from 1999 through 2003. The student population involved in the study consisted of over 10,000 graduate and undergraduate students in 11 engineering departments representing each year for the 1999-2003 period. Prior to the official release of the report to the public, the senior author is glad to to address to outline some of the issues reviewed in the 120-page long report that might be of interest to both the teaching and research faculty.